



Community Participation in AIDS 2022

With just under 2 weeks to go to AIDS 2022, communities are concerned about their ability to participate in-person at this year's largest gathering on HIV and AIDS due to delays and denial of visas for travel to Montreal, Canada.

As the civil society partners on the organizing committee for the AIDS 2022 Conference, we are hearing of the many challenges that communities are facing, including the high cost and time of visa application and processing. We recognise that people from some countries are particularly affected.

As civil society partners, we have been actively responding to these concerns and have taken practical steps to advocate on behalf of our communities by identifying problems, engaging the media, facilitating information from conference attendees facing problems, troubleshooting visa processes, writing letters of support, and engaging directly with embassies. We are working with the IAS Secretariat and other partners to address some of the issues, and we can see that results are mixed, and resolution has not been as fast as we hoped. The IAS Secretariat has informed us, and we have also heard back from activists, that in the past weeks, several visa issues for community participants have been resolved but there is more work to be done.

Since late 2021, the IAS has worked with the Canadian government to facilitate better participation from communities. For example, the IAS Secretariat obtained a "special event code" with the assurance that using this code during the online visa application process would facilitate visa processing, and they are sharing an updated list of delegates requiring visas with the Canadian government weekly, accessible to all Canadian consulates worldwide. To learn more about what the IAS and Organizing Committee have been doing, access the [FAQ on visas](#).

While we value the international conference and its role in keeping HIV high on the agenda, this is not the first time that civil society and community organizations have raised concerns about location, format, and cost. We, as civil society partners, plan to consult with communities to identify solutions, as well as meet with the IAS Secretariat post-conference to consider ways to re-imagine future conferences. Ultimately, we are committed to making the AIDS Conference safe and accessible for our communities everywhere. Forty years into the epidemic, our slogan still holds true: Nothing about us, without us!

